



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

*Plans and Statistics Department*  
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Newport News, VA 23607-0756  
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**



This week, the drum have returned! Both red and black drum catches were reported this week from several locations, and many of our Saltwater Review partners expect the upcoming



weekend to yield great fishing. Flounder are still on in many areas, most notably on the seaside Eastern Shore. Small croakers are just beginning to arrive and larger fish will appear as the waters warm. At the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, black sea bass and tautog have been steady this week. However, please remember that the tautog fishery is closed May 1 through June 24. Also note that the Virginia striped bass trophy season begins TODAY (May 1) and extends through May 15 in the coastal area and June 15 in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Anglers may keep one fish of 32 inches or greater during the trophy season, provided they turn in a catch report (available through the Virginia Saltwater Journal - <https://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com/>). Have a great week of fishing!

**Please note: the Virginia Saltwater Review is only available online. Please feel free to print and distribute to your club or organization as needed.**

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

According to Donna at Captain Bob's Marina, fishing is awesome this week. Over six dozen keeper flounder were landed over the weekend. The majority were caught in Queen's Sound near the bridge in 10 to 20 feet of water. Some flounder were landed from Cockle Creek as well, and the average keeper to throwback ratio has been 1 in 8. The best catches were found on the incoming tide. Smelt has been the best bait, along with minnows and gulp silversides. Assateague Channel has also produced some nice fish, along with the area adjacent to the light house. From the local pier, a 17-inch speckled trout was caught. Surf fishing is doing

really well with black drum. Offshore, anglers were catching limits of black sea bass at Black Fish Banks. The area around the Belle Marine Wreck has been really productive, and there were rumors of four cod caught there!

### **Wachapreague**

Flounder as usual was reported at the Wachapreague Marina, where keeper catches averaged 1 in 12 last week. Northeast winds kept fishing down for much of the week; however, two black drum were caught in the surf on Cedar Island. Staff expects this weekend will be good for drum fishing. A few sea bass and tautog have been caught offshore (remember, the tautog season closes May 1).

According to staff at Captain Zed's, flounder fishing was as expected with many fish just under the 19-inch minimum size limit. A few black drum were landed as well.

### **Cape Charles**

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle reported large red drum released in the surf. Black drum were found at Buoy 13, using fresh sea clams for bait. A few more tautog were landed at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, but keep in mind that fishery closes today (May 1). Flounder up to 22 and 23 inches were found near Oyster. A few croaker are also beginning to show. This weekend, staff expects to see more black drum in the bay.

### **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

A few tautog were caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this weekend, according to staff at Cobb's Marina. No citations were reported.

Staff at Sunset Boating Center reported slow flounder fishing for much of the week. A few tautog were caught near Fisherman's Island.

While no citations were reported at the York River Fishing Center, croaker, grey trout, and speckled trout were caught off of the Gloucester Point Pier. Very few speckled trout have been found in Mobjack Bay yet, and anglers are catching mostly undersized flounder with a few keepers.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

May is here, and it is time for drum. Both big black and red drum are being caught. The best spot for reds has been the surf of the Eastern Shore, especially the inlet between Fisherman's and Smith Islands. The black drum have been caught inside the seaside inlets. The bite on the bayside of the Eastern Shore is due to turn on now. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are being caught inside Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets. Tautog action went out with a bang. Numerous large tautog were caught during the last week of April. You can still fish for them, but you must now practice catch and release. Flounder are being caught everywhere, but there are no hot areas. The good news is that the spiny dogfish have thinned out making fishing easier. Striped bass are now back in season. Through May 15, you are allowed to keep one striped bass, 32 inches or larger. Any kept fish must be reported. Croaker are biting up in the rivers with larger fish becoming more common. Offshore, the first dolphin have been caught, with some citation-sized fish being brought back to the docks. These fish came from the Triple 0's area. Bottom fishing has improved in the deep as the spiny dogfish move towards the north. To our south, there have

been some good dolphin catches out of Hatteras Inlet. Yellowfin tuna catches have been scattered out of both Hatteras and Oregon Inlets. Some big wahoo and a few sailfish are also being caught.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The inshore saltwater spring fishery is now in full gear. The final star of the show made its debut this week, the notorious red drum. Chris's Bait and Tackle reports over a dozen bulls already released by surf anglers from the suds of Smith's Island. This fishery is nowhere near what it will become, but with the recent northeasterly wind and the upcoming full moon, a boost in the action is promising. Peeler crabs, blue crabs, and bunker fished on the Eastern Shore shoals and in the surf of the barrier islands will put you in the zone. These fish are fierce fighters, and can weigh in upwards of 50 pounds.

The red drum's close cousin, the black drum, is also pushing its way into the usual haunts. These two species are usually caught in the same areas. A few blacks are coming from near buoy 13 and the seaside inlets along the Eastern Shore, while smaller fish are still coming from the surf. More large fish will begin taking bait soon, with the beginning of May always the best time for these gentle giants.

With the recent wind and muddy water, flounder pounders are struggling to find fish, with protected areas offering the best opportunity. Long Bay Pointe Bait and Tackle reports that some keepers up to 23 inches are coming from within Lynnhaven Inlet. The Oyster area and Ship Shoal Inlet on the Eastern Shore are providing limits of keepers, while drifters at Buoy 36A were also hooking a few flatties before the recent cold front. According to the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, surf anglers and boaters trolling off the beach are pulling in good numbers of taylor bluefish.

The bayside shallows and lower bay inlets are producing speckled trout; the best color this week is a smoke or green twister tail grub. Folks fishing the inshore waters in Oyster as well as the Eastern Shore seaside inlets are also finding fish on peeler crabs, live bait, and Mirrolures. Puppy drum, with some reportedly over 30 inches, are available within Lynnhaven, Rudee, and Little Creek Inlets. Chartreuse Gulp Swimming Minnows and live gudgeons are the top baits this week for the pups.

Croaker are still hitting along the Virginia Beach ocean front, Ocean View, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, and the lower bay rivers and creeks. Some of these hardheads are pushing to over a pound. The folks at the Ocean View Fishing Pier report that a mix of small founder and sea mullet were rounding out catches of nice croaker, but the bite slowed with the passing front. Anglers are having the best luck with bloodworms and squid.

Tautog action was still going strong, but the skids on the tog fishery went into effect this week. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, tautog season is closed until June 24<sup>th</sup>. James Reid of Virginia Beach snuck in a nice 9-pound, 7-ounce citation tog from the 4<sup>th</sup> island before the closure.

Some nice sea bass are coming from both inshore and offshore locations, with squid, cut bait, and jigs, such as the Braid Slammer jig, working well. The RUDEE MARINER boated some keeper seabass, along with a surprise 24-pound monkfish while fishing near the Chesapeake Light Tower this week.

Grouper, wreckfish, and big blueline tilefish are coming from deep waters off Virginia. The RUDEE ANGLER out of Rudee Inlet loaded up on big tiles to over 19 pounds, black sea bass, and snowy grouper this past week during a deep dropping trip.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Striped bass are being caught in good numbers north of the Virginia border. With the trophy season starting this weekend in Virginia, we can expect the same as well.

Roger, of Jetts' Hardware reports, that the hotspots include the area around the mouth of the Potomac River and Buoy 66.

According to Dan, of Smith Point Marina, striped bass have been caught in the area. There have also been good catches of croaker in the shallow water of the rivers and creeks.

Croaker catches have been increasing in size lately according to Lewis, of Garrets Marina. He also reports some catfish being caught as well.

Capt. Jim Thompson had the following report on his website:

The weather has finally made its decision to warm up. The water temperature is about 58 degrees. That is still too cold for fish to really turn on, but a few croaker are being caught in the upper parts of the Rappahannock and York rivers. The amounts are small but the water needs to be in the high 60s or 70s for them to really start biting. The good thing is that they are coming in good numbers. Popular bait includes bloodworms, fish bites, and squid. The bloodworms are better in the rivers and the squid are better for bay fishing.

### **Virginia Beach**

Nice bluefin tuna and numerous blueline tilefish were caught offshore this weekend, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. Headboats in the area found black sea bass and tautog using clam and peeler crabs as bait. In the Chesapeake Bay, anglers were doing well with flounder. In Rudee Inlet, taylor bluefish, speckled trout, and puppy drum were landed this week.

### **Virginia Piers**

Staff at the Ocean View Pier has seen a variety in the catches this week with medium-sized croaker being caught on squid and shrimp and a few keeper flounder latching onto minnows.

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier, small spot have been caught on blood worms this week. A few puffers and bluefish were also landed.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet has seen respectable catches of tilefish, grouper, mako sharks, dolphin, and yellowfin tuna. People fishing closer to shore have seen black sea bass and bluefish. Spot, sea mullet, skates, and dogfish were found at the area piers. The surf fishing along the northern beaches produced some speckled trout, spot, and croaker before the wind picked up. Fishing in the sound has been negligible for the past week.

South of Oregon Inlet, bluefish up to 5 pounds were found in the surf around Ramp 55 with both metal and bait. Sea mullet were reported on the north beach, with some as large as 2 ½ pounds.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet has been productive with favorable winds. Dolphin and blackfin tuna were two of the more notable species, with yellowfin tuna, wahoo, and king mackerel showing up as well. Inshore, a few large red drum could be found.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at 757.247.2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resource Commission's The Virginia Saltwater Review as the source of the fishing information.

**VMRC introduces the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!** Launched in February, 2009, in conjunction with the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the VMRC has placed collection bins for monofilament fishing line across the state. Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for fish, birds, marine mammals, and boaters by depositing any used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers (see photo). Several of our Saltwater Review partners have placed bins at their locations including Captain Bob's Marina, Chris' Bait and Tackle, the Ocean View Fishing Pier, and Jett's Hardware. If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new bin locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or [alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov).













# ***ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!***

## **THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION**

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,  
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM
			
TAUTOG	KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a  
**ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,**  
**PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)  
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)  
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)  
*Coming soon to the nearly completed  
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)*

As of 01/15/2009



# ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

**Get Hooked!**  
**Report at**  
[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The header includes the commission's name and logo. The main content area is titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" and includes a "Welcome Jgrist," message. There are two main sections: "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" which explains the collection of length data for a stock assessment, and "New 2008 Tautog Regs" which lists the closed season (May 1 through June 24), minimum size limit (14 inches), and possession limit (4 per person). A sidebar on the left shows the "Virginia Recreational ASSESSMENT PROGRAM" logo and a box with statistics for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, and Catches: 3,941. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and a "Feedback" section.

# ***ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!***

## **MEETING NOTICE**

### **Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board**

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Monday, May 11, 2009

7:00 p.m.

The Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) will meet to review the projects, listed below, which are currently under consideration for funding from the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (saltwater recreational fishing license funds). The meetings, on these proposals, will be held on Monday, May 11, 2009, 7:00 p.m., at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, Fourth Floor, Newport News.

Written comments, on the proposals, should be mailed to: Sonya Davis, VMRC Fisheries Management Division, 2600 Washington Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Newport News, VA 23607 or E-mailed to: [sonya.davis@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:sonya.davis@mrc.virginia.gov).

Complete project proposals and additional information are available on the Internet at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfdf/index.shtm>.

#### **Tentative Agenda**

I. Introduction, Announcements, Comments.

II. Status of Fund.

III. Review of Minutes from the November 2008 RFAB Meeting.

IV. Multi-Year Projects for 2009 Renewal.

- A) 2009 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club. \$7,194.
- B) 2009 Saxis Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournaments (Year 8). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. \$1,325.
- C) 2009 Hope House & Oak Grove Nursing Home Fishing Excursions and Clinics. D. Hurst, C. Macin, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. \$4,000.
- D) 2009 Youth Developmental "Hooked on Fishing" Adventure (Year 2). A. Fisher, R. Lockhart, Virginia Charter Boat Association. \$5,780.
- E) 2009 Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection (Year 3). J. Grist, J. Cimino, VMRC. \$10,000.
- F) 2009 Deployment of Artificial Reef Structure. Mike Meier, VMRC. \$100,000.
- G) 2009 Estimate and Assess Social and Economic Importance and Value of Menhaden to Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders and Region (3 Year Study) - Year 3. James Kirkley, VIMS. \$154,452.
- H) 2009 Enhancing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration (Year 15). Robert Orth, VIMS. \$98,309.



## ***ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!***

- I) Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds, Federal FY 2010. Jack Travelstead, VMRC. \$235,563.
- J) Jun - Dec 2009, Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel I the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay. M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$24,544.

### **V. Multi-Year Projects for 2010 Renewal.**

- K) 2010 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 13). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. \$6,500.
- L) 2010 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 9). Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. \$6,500.
- M) 2010 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 16). J. Lucy, VIMS and L. Gillingham, VMRC. \$87,800.
- N) 2010 Improving Stock Assessment of Weakfish - Year 3. Y. Jiao, D. Orth, VPI & SU, and R. O'Reilly, VMRC. \$111,356.
- O) Jan-Dec 2010, Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Yr 9). M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$46,574.

### **VI. New Projects for 2009.**

- P) 2009 Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program. A. Nelson, J. Grist, VMRC. \$3,500.
- Q) 2009 Trophic Position and Ecological Function of Juvenile Menhaden in Chesapeake Bay. C. Jones, J. Schaffler, ODURF. \$43,967.

### **VII. New Projects for 2010.**

- R) 2010 Academic Anglers Children's Fishing Clinic. C. Roberts, A. Bracey, Academic Anglers Fishing Team. \$1,000.
- S) 2010 Understanding the Impacts of Mycobacterial Disease on Striped Bass: When and Where does Mortality Occur in the Rappahannock River. J. Hoenig, W. Vogelbein, VIMS. \$50,535.
- T) 2010 Connecting Productivity in Eelgrass Beds to Recreationally Important Finfishes in Chesapeake Bay: Forage Fishes as Trophic Conduits. R. Latour, K. Sobocinski, J. van Montfrans, J. E. Duffy, VIMS. \$58,329.
- U) 2010 Blueline and Golden Tilefish Population Dynamics Along the Virginian Continental Shelf, Year 1. J. Ballenger, C. Jones, ODURF. \$72,768.

### **VIII. Tentative Dates for Future 2009 RFAB Meetings.**

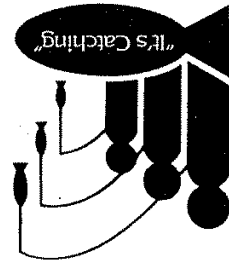
**Public Hearing (7 p.m.) July 13**

**Work Session (5:30 p.m.) & Final Recommendations (7 p.m.) September 14**

**VMRC DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES;  
THEREFORE, IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO A  
DISABILITY, PLEASE ADVISE SONYA DAVIS 757-247-8155, NO LESS THAN 5 WORK  
DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME AND IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS.**

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE  
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**